FIRST COMICS
MAY $1.00
NO.3
$1.25 CANADA
WARP
OH MY GOD... I'M DEAD!
BRUNNER
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FIRST™ NOTES

I was thinking about writing up **First Comics'** New Year's Resolutions, but it's too much of a pain. I'm not psychologically prepared for it, as I'm just now planning on going to Bruce Patterson's Halloween party (where all the Chicago comics professionals are dressing up like Marv Wolfman) and I can't put my head into 1983 yet. Doing comics is sort of like having reverse jet lag.

JON SABLE WHATCHAMACALLIT

I've known Mike Grell for a real long time now, long before I started working inside the comics biz. I first came across his work in a little, short-lived Chicago weekly newspaper, where his two-page comic strip ultimately evolved into *The Warlord*, a comic Mike created, drew and (at least as of this writing) still scripts for DC Comics. A real nice guy who's put in so many appearances at the annual Chicago Comicon that they're thinking about naming the darn thing after him.

So it was natural that Mike became one of the very first people to become aware of **First Comics** – even in those top-secret days of the spring of 1981, I had to bounce ideas off of somebody. And Mike's response – once I told him the scope and organization of our company, was "Great! I'm going to do a monthly for you!"

"Fantastic, Mike, just fantastic," I replied, "Of course you can add 28 pages of script and art, plus a cover, to your schedule. As we all know, writing *Warlord*, and writing and drawing **Starslayer** and the *Tarzan* Sunday newspaper strip doesn't take any time whatsoever, and you can easily add the fifty hours a week to your schedule for a booklength monthly."

"No problem. Listen, I'm not going to do everything forever," Mike responds, conveniently forgetting he regards *Warlord* as his first born carried off by the gypsies. "And I've got this idea that is totally unlike anything I've ever done before – something I know a lot about, something I've always wanted to do. You see, it's about this costumed mercenary. . ."

"You mean, you used to be a costumed mercenary?" I'm nothing if not sarcastic.

"No, but I know a lot about it." Mike then proceeded to reacquaint me with his career in Vietnam. Look, Grell carries around an elephant gun in his boots and has a real hard time getting onto airplanes, so I know he has a background in weaponry. He's also pretty good with a sword – although his wife is better.

"Mike, why would a mercenary want to wear a costume?" I said, thinking I'd throw him.

"Well, you see, he no longer really fights for other countries. He sort of hires himself out as a bodyguard, fights urban terrorists, prevents presidential assassinations; you know, real life stuff."

I reluctantly agreed. It is all too real life, and I thought his concept was unique: a comic book relevant to the 1980's. Real life blood and guts comics – hitting the "it really can happen" approach square on the head.

"You see, the guy's name is **Jon Sable**, and he's a **freelance** tough guy." Mike was warming up into a selling pitch. "But everybody knows Jon Sable is this hotshot mercenary, so he adopts this secret identity – real late at night, when nobody's looking, **Jon Sable, Freelance** turns out all the lights, goes to his top secret room, turns on his typewriter, puts on his pseudonym and grinds out another best-selling children's book."

"Children's book?"

"Yeah," Mike continues matter-of-factly. "It's about these leprechauns that live in Central Park, but nobody knows they're really there, except for this drunk, you see, and because he's a drunk, nobody believes him."

Well, Grell's concept took him far – about 500 miles south, to the **First Comics** temporary offices. And we looked at his presentation. And we talked about it. And we made jokes about it.

And we bought it. Or at least rented it. In point of fact, the first comic **First Comics** committed itself to publishing was **Jon Sable, Freelance.**

Listen, everybody tells you their newest title is the most fantastic thing they've seen since Spider-Man. Fine.

But we really mean it.

Jon Sable, Freelance #1 premieres next month.

NEXT MONTH

Cumulus meets Xander the Unconquerable, and Chaos will never be the same (that's **Warp** #4). E-Man and Mauser meet Dark Albatross (that's **E-Man** #3). And the above-babbled guy makes his premiere.

Oh, yes. Happy New Year!

– Mike Gold

ALSO FIRST IN JANUARY:

E-MAN #2: "'F' AS IN 'FREAK'" Ford Fairmont and the Unhappy F-Men kidnap Nova, which ticks off E-Man, Michael Mauser and a large New York entertainment conglomerate to no little end! The first of a two-part soul-staggering classic in the making, courtesy of writer Martin Pasko and artist Joe Staton! Plus: Mike Mist in a one-page search for the Winkies killer!

Rick Obadiah, Publisher

Mike Gold, Managing Editor
Joe Staton, Art Director
Rick Oliver, Associate Editor
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Richard Felber, Business Manager
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A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

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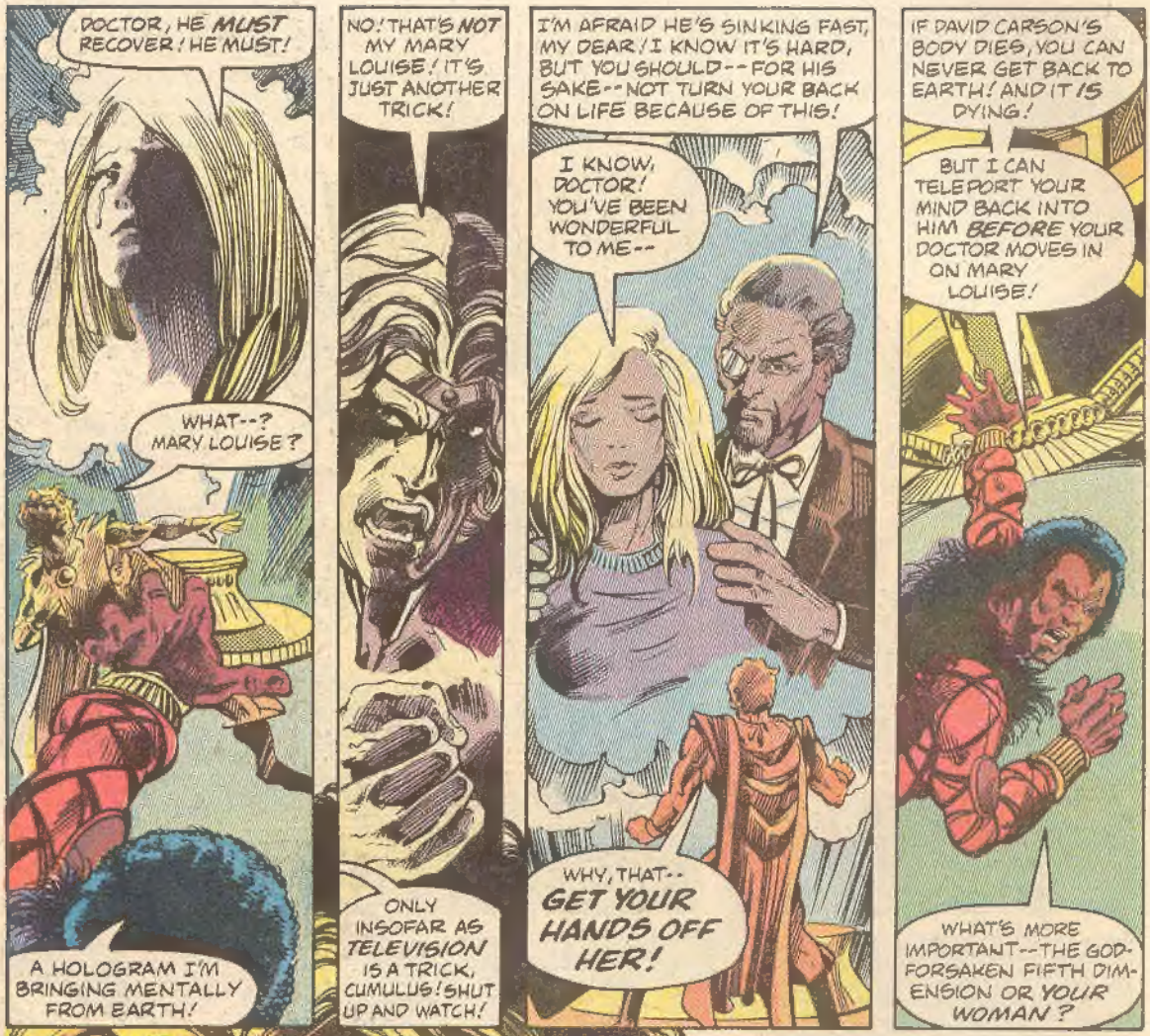
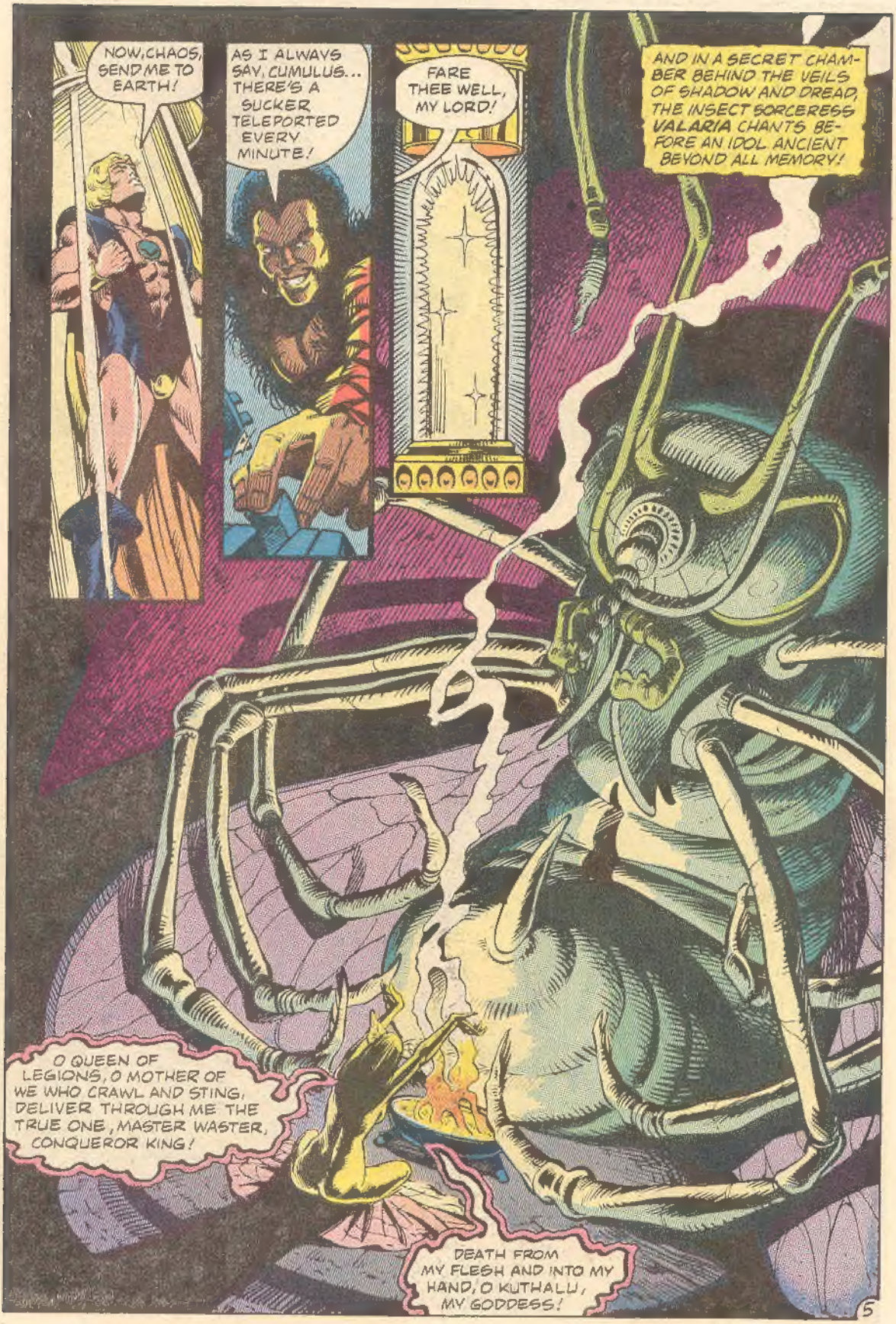
INKER AND LETTERER
JANICE COHEN
COLORIST
MIKE GOLD
EDITOR
BASED ON THE PLAYS BY BURY ST. EDMUND AND STUART GORDON!
CHAOS ASCENDANT!
IN FORTRESS ROTTWANG, STANDING IN THE ABYSS BEYOND FAIR FEN-RA IN A DISTANT DIMENSION, THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO BROTHERS NEARS A CONCLUSION!
DIE, LORD CUMULUS! DIE BENEATH THE HEAT OF TEN THOUSAND SUNS! DIE KNOWING YOU HAVE FAILED!

I CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS -- BUT WAIT!
THE REFLECTOR SHIELD! IT'S WITHIN REACH!
HE MUST'VE THOUGHT THIS COULDN'T PROTECT ME!
HE'S RIGHT, BUT I DON'T WANT PROTECTION!
INSTEAD, HOW ABOUT REFLECTING PART OF THE BEAM BACK AT THE PROJECTOR?
VOOM!
CUMULUS! NO!!
DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL, CHAOS!
I'M SICK OF YOU AND YOUR TOYS! SICK TO DEATH!

YOU ATTACK ME! YOU DRAIN WHOLE GALAXIES OF LIFE! YOU KILL SARGON!
WELL, NOW IT ENDS!
NO-- NOT MY THRONE-- MY STAR-SUCKING MACHINE! YOU BASTARD, CUMULUS--!
BASTARD? BASTARD?
THAT'S A GOOD ONE, CHAOS!!
THERE'S NOTHING THAT WILL KEEP ME FROM BURNING YOU ALIVE!
FEEL IT, PRINCE CHAOS? FEEL THE FIRE IN YOUR GUT?
DON'T-- BE TOO SURE, BROTHER!
TAKE A LOOK BEHIND YOU--!
3


DOCTOR, HE MUST RECOVER! HE MUST!
WHAT--? MARY LOUISE?
A HOLOGRAM I'M BRINGING MENTALLY FROM EARTH!
NO! THAT'S NOT MY MARY LOUISE! IT'S JUST ANOTHER TRICK!
ONLY INSOFAR AS TELEVISION IS A TRICK, CUMULUS! SHUT UP AND WATCH!
I'M AFRAID HE'S SINKING FAST, MY DEAR! I KNOW IT'S HARD, BUT YOU SHOULD--FOR HIS SAKE--NOT TURN YOUR BACK ON LIFE BECAUSE OF THIS!
I KNOW, DOCTOR! YOU'VE BEEN WONDERFUL TO ME--
WHY, THAT-- GET YOUR HANDS OFF HER!
IF DAVID CARSON'S BODY DIES, YOU CAN NEVER GET BACK TO EARTH! AND IT IS DYING!
BUT I CAN TELEPORT YOUR MIND BACK INTO HIM BEFORE YOUR DOCTOR MOVES IN ON MARY LOUISE!
WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT--THE GOD-FORSAKEN FIFTH DIMENSION OR YOUR WOMAN?

NOT SO FAST! IF I DO GO, YOU MUST SWEAR NEVER TO TOUCH MY PLANET--NO, MY ENTIRE GALAXY!
DONE, BROTHER! MY FEUD WITH LUGULBANDA HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH EARTH!
NOW HURRY--INTO THE TUBE!
OK! BUT REMEMBER YOUR OATH!


NOW, CHAOS, SEND ME TO EARTH!
AS I ALWAYS SAY, CUMULUS... THERE'S A SUCKER TELEPORTED EVERY MINUTE!
FARE THEE WELL, MY LORD!
AND IN A SECRET CHAMBER BEHIND THE VEILS OF SHADOW AND DREAD, THE INSECT SORCERESS VALARIA CHANTS BEFORE AN IDOL ANCIENT BEYOND ALL MEMORY!
O QUEEN OF LEGIONS, O MOTHER OF WE WHO CRAWL AND STING, DELIVER THROUGH ME THE TRUE ONE, MASTER WASTER, CONQUEROR KING!
DEATH FROM MY FLESH AND INTO MY HAND, O KUTHALU, MY GODDESS!

GRANT ME THIS POISON ISSUE, HE OF THE OTHER WORLD, O GODDESS! GRANT ME MY INSTRUMENT OF VENGEANCE!
AM! IT IS DONE!
IT IS I AAAAAAAAAAAA
I...AM...
IT IS...
I GO TO SEE MY CURSE FULFILLED! FAREWELL, O GODDESS OF MY YOUTH!
WITHIN THIS EGG IS HE WHOM THE CHITTERING PROPHETS FORETOLD! I SHALL SERVE HIM AND HE SHALL WORK MY WILL!
AND THE CHAMBER BREATHES SILENTLY.

MEANWHILE, FAR FROM FORTRESS ROTTWANG, A SHIMMERING HAZE REFORMS--
--INTO LORD CUMULUS!
BUT IT IS OBVIOUS THAT HE IS NOT ON EARTH--
--IN ANY SENSE OF THE WORD!
YEEOW!
GOT TO GRAB THIS-- WHATEVER-IT-IS--
UNNH!
THAT SON OF A BITCH TRICKED ME! I'LL BREAK EVERY BONE IN HIS DISEASED BODY WHEN I GET OUT OF--
--HERE--
GOOD LORD, WHAT IS THIS PLACE??

THIS IS GREAT! I FAILED SARGON, FAILED LUGULBANDA, AND NOW MARY LOUISE! ALL BY BEING A JERK!
NO -- I'VE GOT TO GET A GRIP ON MYSELF. I CAN'T GIVE UP!
AND I CAN'T WAIT FOR LUGULBANDA TO RESCUE ME! I MUST FIND A WAY OUT!
THERE'S SOMETHING OVER THIS RISE...
...WHEW. SOMETHING IS RIGHT.
WELL, IT DOES LOOK AS IF SOME INTELLIGENT BEING BUILT THIS... THING. MAYBE I'LL FIND SOME ANSWERS IN THE CASTLE.
BUT I HAVE A FEELING I'M NOT GOING TO LIKE THEM...

THIS IS GREAT! I FAILED SARGON, FAILED LUGULBANDA, AND NOW MARY LOUISE! ALL BY BEING A JERK!
NO-- I'VE GOT TO GET A GRIP ON MYSELF I CAN'T YIELD
AND I CAN'T WAIT FOR LUGUL-BANDA TO RESCUE ME! I MUST FIND A WAY OUT!
THERE'S SOMETHING OVER THIS RISE.
WHEN SOMETHING IS RIGHT
WELL, IT DOES LOOK AS IF SOME INTELLIGENT BEING BUILT THIS... THING. MAYBE I'LL FIND SOME ANSWERS IN THE CASTLE.
BUT I HAVE A FEELING I'M GOING TO LIKE THEM...

THE DOOR IS BARRICADED-- BUT NOT VERY WELL. I CAN GET IN ANYWAY
THIS COULD BE ALL A CHAOS TRICK-- BUT IT HAS A DIFFERENT FEEL--OLDER.
AHH, I'M JUST IMAGINING THINGS.
WHAT--?
RUN! ESCAPE! RUN FOR LIFE--!
WAIT! DON'T GO--!
MASTER DREAMS AGAIN! RUN!
I AM TRAUM THE ELDEST! DID THE MASTER SEND YOU? WILL YOU EAT US? WE ARE NOT TASTY.
WHO IS THIS MASTER? WHERE CAN I FIND HIM?
WHO? THE MASTER DREAMS US UP--GIVES US LIFE! WHERE? DO NOT KNOW--

BUT DREAMS CANNOT GO UP THAT STAIRCASE
IF YOU ARE NOT DREAM--MAYBE YOU WILL FIND MASTER UP THERE.
WELL, I'VE HAD MY DOUBTS LATELY--
--BUT I THINK I'M REAL
AND YOUR MASTER IS THE ONE I WANT--
--TO SEE
GOOD GOD. WHAT IN THE WORLD--?
ARE YOU THE MASTER?
I AM HE WHO DREAMS. AND YOU INTERLOPER, DISTURB MY PEACE.
BUT YOU LOOK TO BE A PRISONER--?
I AM AS I CHOOSE TO BE
YOU CANNOT HELP ME-- NOW--
--BUT PERHAPS I CAN HELP YOU--?

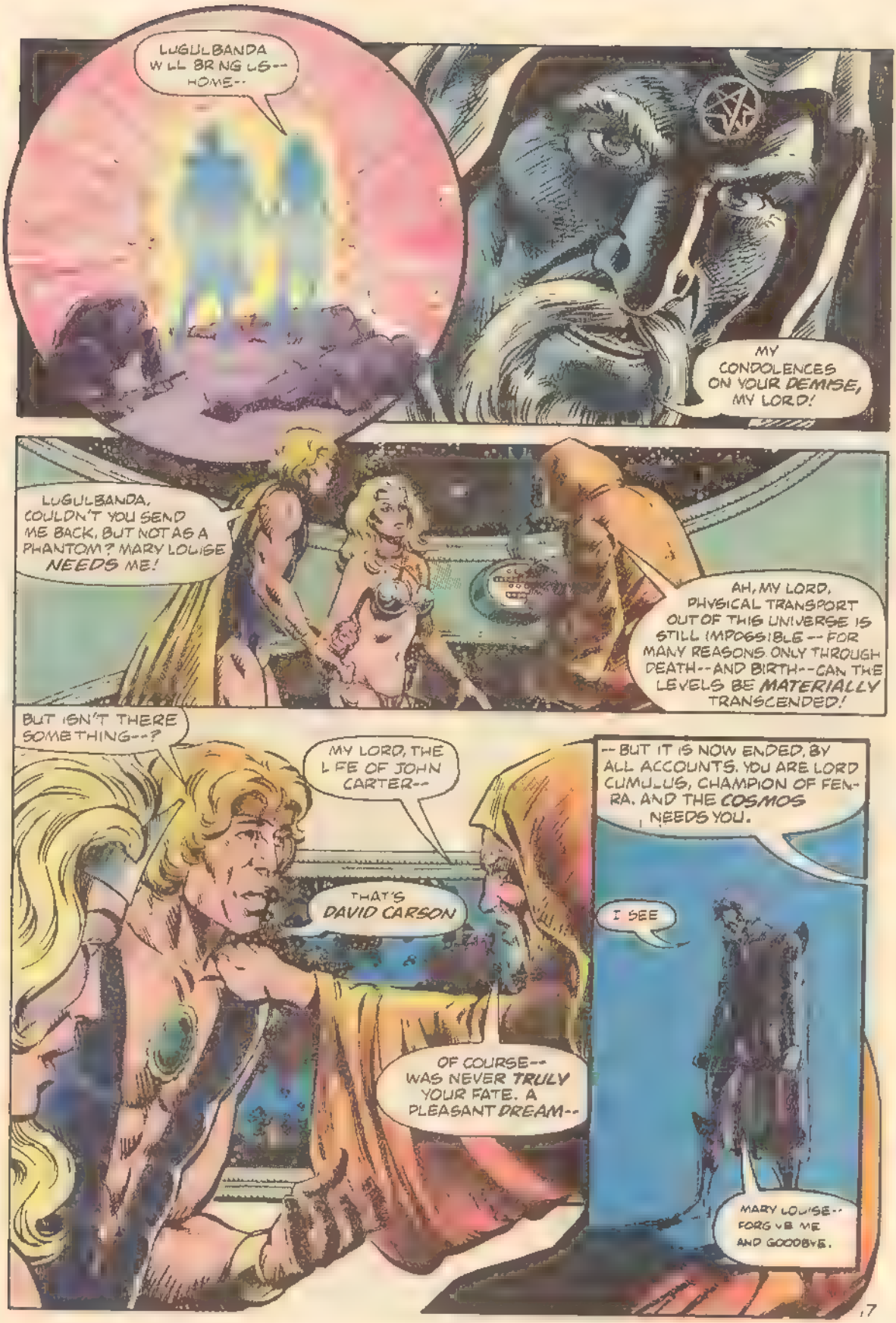
WELL, I WAS LOOKING FOR A WAY BACK TO EARTH, MY HOME PLANET.
I DON'T SUPPOSE...
ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO HE WHO DREAMS.
OF COURSE, THAT'S THE PROBLEM...
BUT NO MATTER. I DREAM A GATEWAY TO YOUR WORLD.
I DREAM IT OPENS.
SO THAT YOU MAY FULFILL A DESTINY--
--MY SON.
AND NOW I DREAM YOU THROUGH THE GATEWAY--

I MADE IT! I'M BACK ON EARTH! THERE I AM!
BUT--I'M SOME SORT OF PHANTOM!
BUT THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IS UNITING WITH MY BODY BEFORE IT DIES--BEFORE I DIE!
GREETINGS, LORD CUMULUS! NICE BODY YOU'VE GOT HERE!
DON'T GAPE! IT IS I, PRINCE CHAOS!
AFTER OUR BATTLE, I DECIDED I NEEDED A LITTLE VACATION--ON EARTH!
AND SINCE THERE WAS A VACANCY HERE... HOPE YOU DON'T MIND!
REVEREND! HE'S NOT DYING! HE'S AWAKE!! OH, DAVID!!
666
MARY LOUISE! NO! THAT'S NOT ME!!
3

YOU SLIME, CHAOS
DAVID, YOU SOUND-- DIFFERENT. ARE YOU OK?
VERY DIFFERENT AND BETTER THAN OK, HONEY!
DAVID YOU'RE BACK!
OH I'M MORE THAN BACK, MARY LOUISE!
LET ME SHOW YOU HOW MUCH BETTER!
DAVID! STOP! CONTROL YOURSELF!
I'VE GOT TO STOP THIS THE ONLY THING TO DO IS ENTER MARY LOUISE'S BODY AND CONTROL HER!
FORGIVE ME DARLING!
NOW PIG I DEAL WITH LORD CAMULUS

OH DEAR!
HOLD ON, MISS BIGELOW--
SYMAX IS HERE MY PRINCE
SYMAX! THAT'S CUMULUS! IN THE GIRL! DO SOMETHING!
WITH PLEASURE MASTER!
SYMAX?
A LITTLE FATAL AIR EMBOLISM IN YOUR-- HEART?
ARRRH!
YOU-- YOU'VE KILLED HIM! YOU KILLED ME!
I HAD THE OPTION OF EITHER KILLING YOUR LOVER OR YOUR BODY--
--AND I CHOSE THE LATTER. EITHER WAY, WE WIN.

BLUNDERING BUT EFFECTIVE, SYMAX ! EVEN HALF-REVENGE IS SWEET.
I AM A WORM, MY PRINCE !
AT LEAST YOU SET THE TRANSPORTER ON AUTOMATIC RETURN !
I CAN'T STAY N MARY LOUISE ANY LONGER--
BUT YOU DISINTEGRATED --I DON T UNDER-STAND--
DON'T BE TOO HASTY, MY LORD.
SARGON!! ALIVE !!
THAT WOULD BE PAR FOR THE COURSE, MY LORD--
NOW COME-- TAKE MY HAND--
-BUT-- GODS ! WHERE DO I GO ?
NO MORE BODY-- AND NO WAY BACK TO FEN-RA--
YES, THANKS TO YOUR FOLLOWING MY LAST ORDER.


LUGULBANDA WILL BRING US-- HOME--
MY CONDOLENCES ON YOUR DEMISE, MY LORD!
LUGULBANDA, COULDN'T YOU SEND ME BACK, BUT NOT AS A PHANTOM? MARY LOUISE NEEDS ME!
AH, MY LORD, PHYSICAL TRANSPORT OUT OF THIS UNIVERSE IS STILL IMPOSSIBLE -- FOR MANY REASONS. ONLY THROUGH DEATH--AND BIRTH--CAN THE LEVELS BE MATERIALLY TRANSCENDED!
BUT ISN'T THERE SOMETHING--?
MY LORD, THE LIFE OF JOHN CARTER--
THAT'S DAVID CARSON
OF COURSE-- WAS NEVER TRULY YOUR FATE. A PLEASANT DREAM--
-- BUT IT IS NOW ENDED, BY ALL ACCOUNTS. YOU ARE LORD CUMULUS, CHAMPION OF FENRA. AND THE COSMOS NEEDS YOU.
I SEE
MARY LOUISE-- FORGIVE ME AND GOODBYE.

YEARNING BACK AT FORTRESS ROTTANG, THE SPIRITS OF CHAOS AND SYMAX HAVE RETURNED--
AND THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING, SYMAX! I--
BOSS THE SCANNERS--!
IT'S VALARIA! SHE'S RETURNED!
SHE ALWAYS DID HAVE A STRONG DEATH-WISH, SYMAX!
INDEED I HAVE, CHAOS--FOR YOUR DEATH!
AND NOW THE SPAWN OF VALARIA SHALL GRIND YOU--AND ALL THAT LIVES--INTO THAT DIRT!
YOU SPURNED ME--TREATED ME LIKE DIRT--
NEXT ISSUE: THE COSMIC MENACE OF XANDER!

warped words

FIRST COMICS, 1014 DAVIS STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

As I sit here before my Olympia ES101 slavemaster, we're a few days short of Halloween (and trick-or-treating has been banned in a number of Chicago suburbs), and we're a few weeks short of the comics rack debut of **Warp** #1.

Unfortunately, the great god LateFee must be satiated, so we had the foresight to mail out reproduction-sized photocopies of the first issue to a number of letter writers selected at random. Of course, that means we'll have to run more great thoughts on our first issue next month, too, which is fine by us. First issues are important.

A representative sampling of comments received thus far

Dear Mike, Rick, etc.

It was with surprise and pleasure that I received the advance photocopy of **Warp** #1. As a well-informed comics fan, I had heard of this forthcoming new publication, but I never expected to be able to read issue #1 ahead of my sisters and friends.

The story was extremely well-written. It immediately captured my attention to David Carson's confusion when he's suddenly abducted from Earth, clothed in strange garments and finds himself possessed of unknown power.

Without a doubt Lord Cumulus will continue to grow and develop in the issues to come, but Sargon is already a strong and very capable person. If only more female comic characters could be like her. Sargon's comment to Cumulus, "You learn quickly, for a man!" was absolutely priceless. Her solo back-up story was a good supplemental insight into her personality.

It looks like you've got a winner here—I can hardly wait to see it in living color. Keep the creative minds going.

Karen Wu
851 S. Tantau Ave.
Cupertino, CA

Glad you enjoyed receiving the photocopy, Karen. Anything to promote sibling rivalry.

Dear Friends,

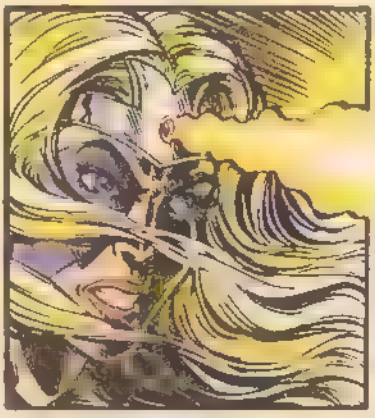
To start this letter in the most sincere way possible, I would like to say thank you for making **Warp**. I thoroughly enjoyed the first issue of the magazine. To me, the artwork was stunning, very Adams influenced on certain panels. Frank Brunner was an excellent choice to get the ball rolling.

I also liked the Sargon back-up story. She is a good character and should regularly have her own strip. Hats off to the new creative team of John Ostrander and Lenin Delsol, they provided a good plot, and strong, dramatic pencils.

Thanks for a memorable experience.

Mark Waldman
9639 Amigo Avenue
Northridge, CA

Well, Mark, I've got good news for you. John, Lenin and Sargon will all be back for another go-around, a three-parter this time starting with issue #5. And you'll be seeing more from John and Lenin, separately and together. Like this coming summer, for example.



Mike, Frank, Peter and Bob:

I was surprised and pleased to find a copy of **Warp** #1 in my mailbox this morning. I was, to say the least, flattered that you would request my opinion for your first lettercol. So, here goes. . .

I enjoyed the book for the most part, but there were a few things that bothered me.

The initial encounter with David Carson was, perhaps, a little too brief. And I hope we will see lots more of Mary Louise Bigelow.

And then there's Sargon's armor. . . or rather, lack thereof. Even if she's the most devastating warrior ever, there's a lot of unscarred flesh showing that should be really marked up. Surely her beauty can be conveyed without resorting to such impractical armor.

The art was very nice, even in the uncolored photocopy. Frank and Bob: you work very well together. I especially enjoyed the way you laid the art out, Frank. The combination of simple, straightforward layouts on some pages contrasted well with the more unusual layouts of others.

I'm not too certain about the script, Peter. It seemed that you were a little stiff at the beginning. Of course, the story began to flow nicely after a few pages.

I think you have a winner here.

Sheldon A. Wiebe
8535 47th Ave. N.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

*The **ultimate** encounter with David Carson was pretty brief, too, Sheldon, as this issue's cover clearly notes. As for Sargon's costume, well, I've seen two different actresses each play the role for around a year, and they both look fantastic. I figure Lugulbanda's got some sort of wound-healing or do-it-yourself plastic surgery thing going on the side.*

People,

The words "labor of love" come to mind. **Warp** has an important feel to it, as if the events here could happen at some time.

As for the art, Brunner and Smith did a beautiful job in capturing both the beautiful and the bizarre aspects of the tale. Also, a tip of the hat to newcomer Lenin Delsol and to Joe Staton for a stunning job on the back-up tale.

And, on the subject of "Rough and Tumble," it was also an impressive debut effort by John Ostrander. Bits of the dialogue were just a tad awkward, but I was impressed by his touches of humor, including the obscure David Letterman reference, and by the very power of his narrative.

As I said, a labor of love. See you next month.

John Wilcox
40 Hales Court
Westport, CT

I think everybody involved will own up to the "labor of love" tag – that's an important element in any storytelling success. Thanks for the kind words, John.

NEXT MONTH: Vaarla's in for some righteous vengeance, and vengeance's name is. . . Xander the Unconquerable! Plus — our three-part Harris/Ditko Faceless Ones comes to a gut-wrenching conclusion! Some fun, folks!

AND IN MARCH – The very first **Warp Special**, revealing the untold (in any medium) origin of Chaos, Prince of Madness! A booklength (28 pages!) thriller by Peter Gillis, Howard Chaykin and George Freeman!

AND IN THE MAIL – Hopefully, is your letter (backwards talk it). Send your comments to **Warped Words, c/o First Comics, Inc., 1014 Davis Street, Evanston, IL 60201.** We look forward to hearing from you!

– Mike Gold

THE FACELESS ONES

SPEAK, PARALOX-- YOU MISERABLE EXCUSE FOR A *FORMER KING!* TELL ME WHERE YOUR *DAUGHTER* AND HER COMMONER *BOY FRIEND* ARE OR I'LL TEAR OUT EVERY HAIR OF YOUR STRINGY *BEARD!*

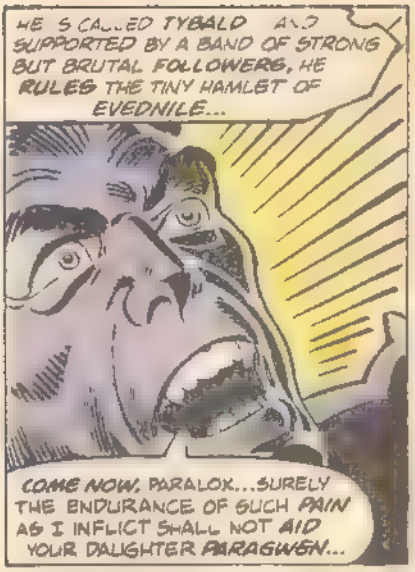
[illegible] WILL, TYBALD [illegible] SHALL NOT [illegible]

A MASQUE IN THE HAND

[illegible] ANOTHER DIMEN- [illegible] FAR REMOVED [illegible] THE EARTH [illegible] CRUELTY [illegible] A SMALL SAMPLE [illegible] NEW [illegible] MORE BEFORE OUR [illegible]

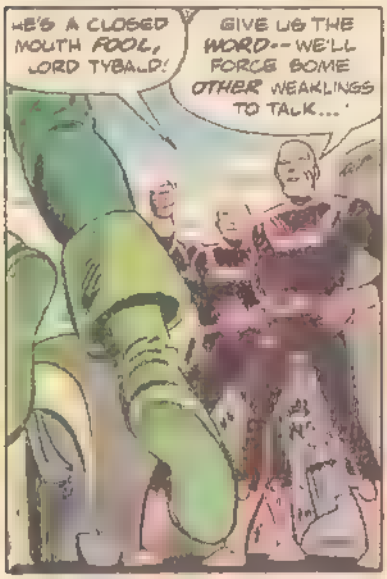
JACK C HARRIS WRITER · STEVE DITKO [illegible] PATTERSON · JANICE COHEN · MIKE [illegible]

[illegible] WARP [illegible] STUART GORDON AND BURY ST EDMUND

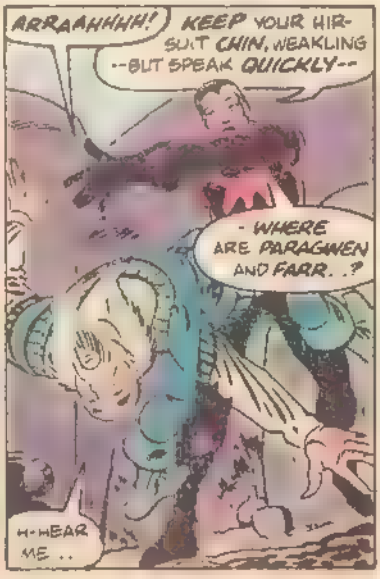

HE'S CALLED TYBALD AND SUPPORTED BY A BAND OF STRONG BUT BRUTAL FOLLOWERS, HE RULES THE TINY HAMLET OF EVEDNILE...
COME NOW, PARALOK...SURELY THE ENDURANCE OF SUCH PAIN AS I INFLICT SHALL NOT AID YOUR DAUGHTER PARAGWEN...

AND IF YOU DO NOT REVEAL HER WHEREABOUTS... OTHERS JUST MIGHT...
N-NO. LEAVE THE OTHERS BE

I AM YOUR ENEMY. TYBALD DO YOUR WORST TO ME AND TO ME ALONE...GRRRK!


HE'S A CLOSED MOUTH FOOL, LORD TYBALD!
GIVE US THE WORD--WE'LL FORCE SOME OTHER WEAKLINGS TO TALK...

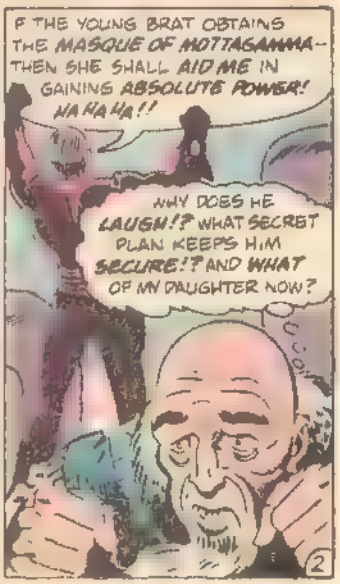
NO--NO! VERY WELL I SHALL S-SPEAK.
IN THE NAME OF HE WHO DREAMS - S THERE NO END TO PARALOK'S TORMENT? MUST HE FOREVER SUFFER FOR HIS MISJUDGMENT OF LORD TYBALD!?


ARRAAHHHH! KEEP YOUR HIR-SUIT CHIN, WEAKLING --BUT SPEAK QUICKLY--
- WHERE ARE PARAGWEN AND FARR..?
H-HEAR ME..

FOR LONG YOU PREACHED PEACE, TYBALD...AND FINALLY CONVINCED ME TO ORDER OUR PEOPLE AWAY FROM WEAPONS AND WAR
THEN, WHEN WE WERE DEFENSELESS, YOU AND YOUR VILE FOLLOWERS SEIZED MY CROWN...

I KNOW ALL TH S, OLD FOOL--AS I KNOW YOUR DAUGHTER RETAINED HER WEAPON-- THE EN-CHANTED STARHOOK! WHERE DID SHE TAKE T AND WHY!?
SH-SHE SEEKS THE MASQUE OF MOTTAGAMMA --FOR WITH ITS POWER, YOU CAN BE DESTROYED!

THE THE MASQUE!? HAHAHA!! THE MASQUE!!!


F THE YOUNG BRAT OBTAINS THE MASQUE OF MOTTAGAMMA--THEN SHE SHALL AID ME IN GAINING ABSOLUTE POWER! HAHAHA!!
WHY DOES HE LAUGH!? WHAT SECRET PLAN KEEPS HIM SECURE!? AND WHAT OF MY DAUGHTER NOW?
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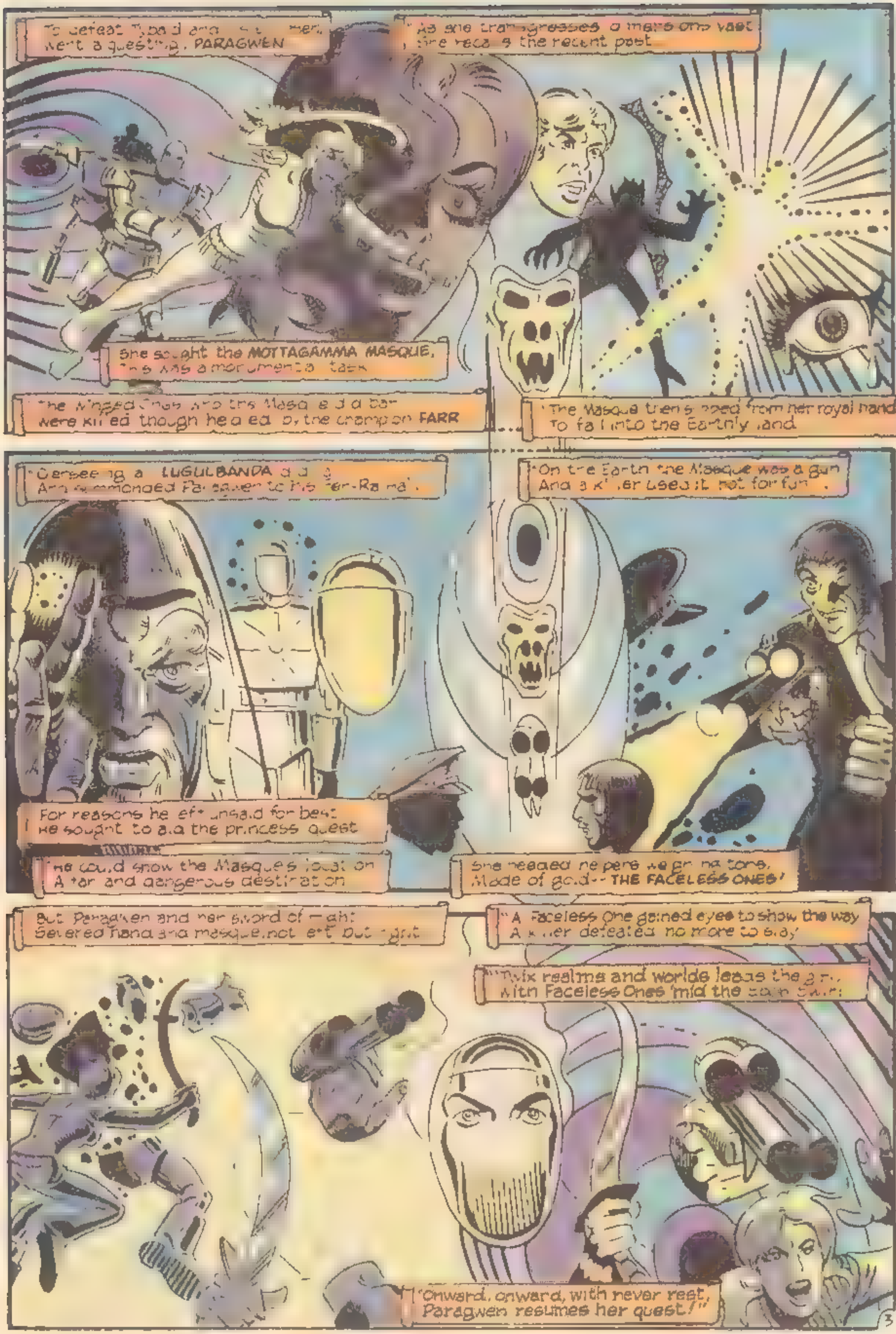
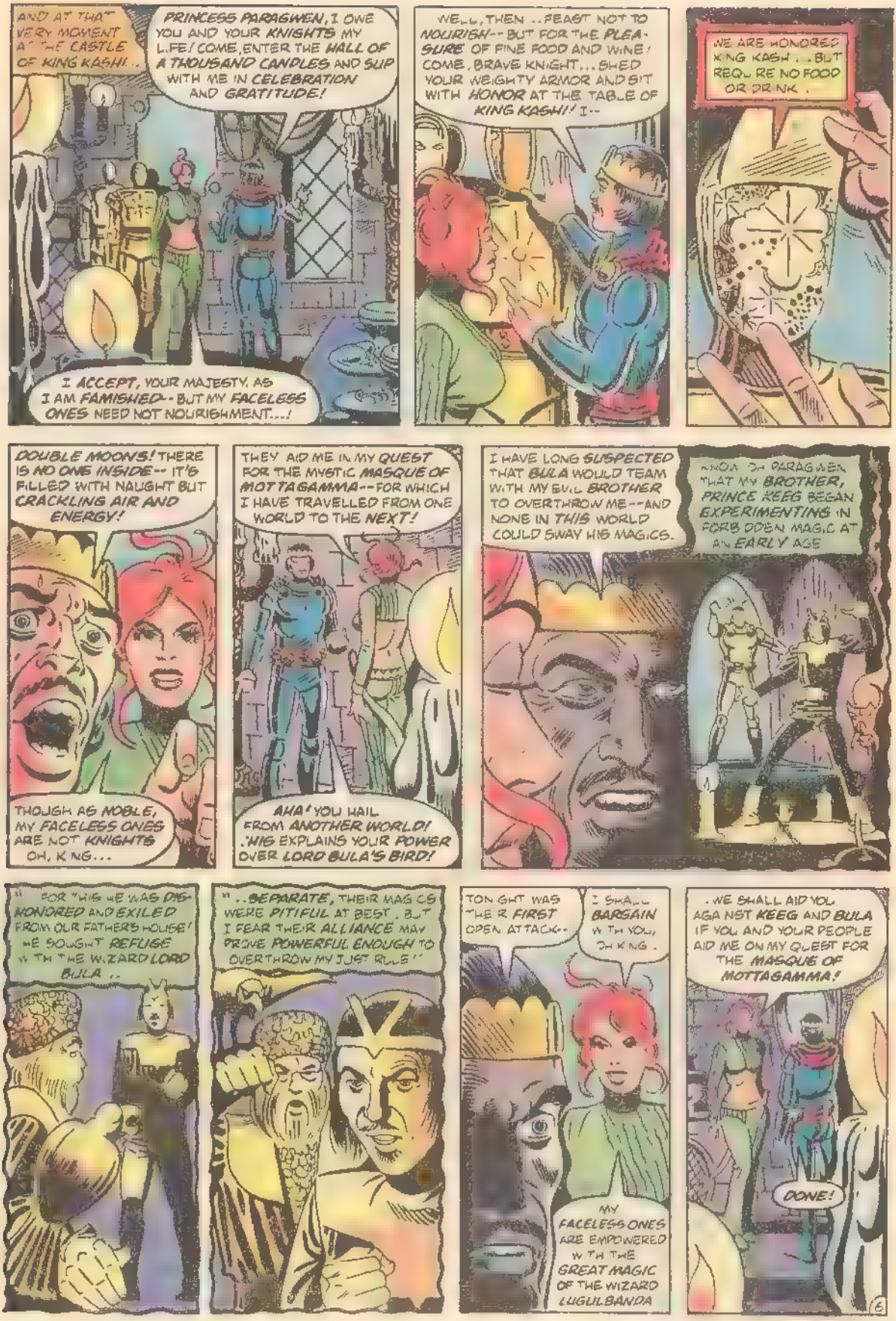

went a questing, PARAGWEN
the recent past
She sought the MOTTAGAMMA MASQUE,
the champion FARR
The Masque then from her royal hand,
To fall into the Earthly land
LUGULBANDA
On the Earth the Masque was a gun
And a killer used it not for fun.
For reasons he left unsaid for best
He sought to aid the princess quest
He could show the Masque's location
A far and dangerous destination
Made of gold -- THE FACELESS ONES!
But Paragwen and her sword of might
Severed hand and masque, not left but right
"A Faceless One gained eyes to show the way
A killer defeated no more to slay
"Twix realms and worlds leads the girl,
With Faceless Ones 'mid the
"Onward, onward, with never rest,
Paragwen resumes her quest!"

UNDAUNTED BY BITTER FAILURE, PARAGWEN LEADS THE REMAINING FAITHFUL FACELESS ONES THROUGH THE DIMENSIONAL GAP..!
THE SWIRLING BLACKNESS--THAT IS OUR PATHWAY--!
WE HAVE EMERGED, PRINCESS...INTO STILL ANOTHER ALIEN DIMENSION!
I CAN SEE THAT, METALIC ONE, CAN YOU DETECT THE MASQUE NEARBY!?
THE MASQUE OF MOTTAGAMMA--SO MASSIVE IN POWER THAT, AMID THE DIMENSIONAL REALMS, IT EXISTS AS A DIFFERENT OBJECT ALTOGETHER!
BACK, DEVIL BIRD--IS YOUR MASTER SO SPINELESS AS TO SEND ONLY YOU! TO CONFRONT ME?
BEHOLD! 'T IS KING KASH! HIMSELF--BUT I HEARD OF NO PROCLAMATION TO BE DECLARED THIS EVE...?
HOLD BACK...I WISH TO SEE WHAT TRANSPIRES HERE...
HE...HE APPEARS TO BE ABOUT TO SEND HIS HUNTING BIRD ON A KILL...
NAY! HE IS ATTACKING THE BIRD...
NO! THE HUNTING FOWL ASSAULTS THE KING!
THAT WINGED CREATURE--IT FORCES THEIR KING TO THE VERY EDGE OF THE BATTLEMENT--!
A WRONG STEP WILL PLUNGE HIM DOOMWARD!
AWAY--SEND YOUR MASTER IF HE IS MAN ENOUGH TO MEET ME SWORD TO SWORD!
YOUR MAJESTY--THE EDGE--BEWARE!
BACK--AWAY! IF ONLY I COULD CLUTCH YOUR FEATHERED NECK!
BUT THEN, RAZOR SHARP TALONS POISE FOR A PAIR OF ROYAL EYES!
NO! HE'S FALLING BACK--HE'S--!
NOOOOOO! YAHHHHHH!!

A WRENCHING OF HIS BACK--AND AN OUT-STRETCHING OF HIS ARM AND
SAVED--HE'S SNARED THE OUTCROPPING--!
BUT HIS GRIP IS FAILING! FACELESS ONES--TO MY AID!
UNHESITANTINGLY, THE FACELESS ONES COMPLY--AND PARAGWEN RISES TO THE RESCUE
CLIMB DOWNWARD YOUR MAJESTY--LET STARHOOK SEVER LIFE FROM THIS FEATHERED DEMON!
PRAY YOUR BLADE IS MAGICAL, FA.RONE--FOR THE BIRD SURELY IS!
SHE'S RESCUED HIM--BUT THE GIRL'S KNIGHTS WAVER--THEY SHALL FALL IF SHE FAILS TO SLAY THE EVIL BIRD!
BUT SPEED, SKILL AND THE MAGIC OF STARHOOK COMPLETE THE TASK AT HAND--!
AWWKKK--
AND AS THE FEATHERED FIEND REVERTS TO THE GROUND ITS DEATH IS SOMEHOW NOTED IN THIS FAR SEE TOWER
A TOWER SURROUNDED BY THE AIR OF MAGIC AND THE AURA OF MYSTICISM...!
WELL, LORD BULA...WELL!? HAS YOUR BIRD DISPOSED OF MY BROTHER, THE KING?
'TIS STRANGE IT HAS YET TO RETURN, PRINCE KEEG.
STRANGE? STRANGE? DID YOU NOT PROMISE TO DESTROY HIM FOR MY PLEDGE OF A POST WHEN I ASCEND THE THRONE!?
OF COURSE, BUT THE UNFORESEEABLE HAS OCCURED
THE BIRD WAS PROTECTED BY A POWERFUL SPELL--NOTHING IN THIS WORLD COULD HAVE HALTED ITS PURPOSE!
WHAT!? WHAT!? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I AM SAYING, DEAR PRINCE...THAT WHATEVER STOPPED MY BIRD MAY NOT BE OF THIS WORLD.


AND AT THAT VERY MOMENT AT THE CASTLE OF KING KASHI..
PRINCESS PARAGWEN, I OWE YOU AND YOUR KNIGHTS MY LIFE! COME, ENTER THE HALL OF A THOUSAND CANDLES AND SUP WITH ME IN CELEBRATION AND GRATITUDE!
I ACCEPT, YOUR MAJESTY, AS I AM FAMISHED--BUT MY FACELESS ONES NEED NOT NOURISHMENT...!
WELL, THEN ..FEAST NOT TO NOURISH--BUT FOR THE PLEASURE OF FINE FOOD AND WINE! COME, BRAVE KNIGHT... SHED YOUR WEIGHTY ARMOR AND SIT WITH HONOR AT THE TABLE OF KING KASH!! I--
WE ARE HONORED KING KASH...BUT REQUIRE NO FOOD OR DRINK.
DOUBLE MOONS! THERE IS NO ONE INSIDE-- IT'S FILLED WITH NAUGHT BUT CRACKLING AIR AND ENERGY!
THOUGH AS NOBLE, MY FACELESS ONES ARE NOT KNIGHTS OH, KING...
THEY AID ME IN MY QUEST FOR THE MYSTIC MASQUE OF MOTTAGAMMA--FOR WHICH I HAVE TRAVELLED FROM ONE WORLD TO THE NEXT!
AHA! YOU HAIL FROM ANOTHER WORLD! THIS EXPLAINS YOUR POWER OVER LORD BULA'S BIRD!
I HAVE LONG SUSPECTED THAT BULA WOULD TEAM WITH MY EVIL BROTHER TO OVERTHROW ME--AND NONE IN THIS WORLD COULD SWAY HIS MAGICS.
KNOW, PARAGWEN, THAT MY BROTHER, PRINCE KEEG BEGAN EXPERIMENTING IN FORBIDDEN MAGIC AT AN EARLY AGE
"...FOR THIS WE WAS DISHONORED AND EXILED FROM OUR FATHER'S HOUSE! WE SOUGHT REFUGE WITH THE WIZARD LORD BULA..
"...SEPARATE, THEIR MAGICS WERE PITIFUL AT BEST. BUT I FEAR THEIR ALLIANCE MAY PROVE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO OVERTHROW MY JUST RULE!"
TONIGHT WAS THE FIRST OPEN ATTACK--
I SHALL BARGAIN WITH YOU, OH KING.
MY FACELESS ONES ARE EMPOWERED WITH THE GREAT MAGIC OF THE WIZARD LUGULBANDA
WE SHALL AID YOU AGAINST KEEG AND BULA IF YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE AID ME ON MY QUEST FOR THE MASQUE OF MOTTAGAMMA!
DONE!
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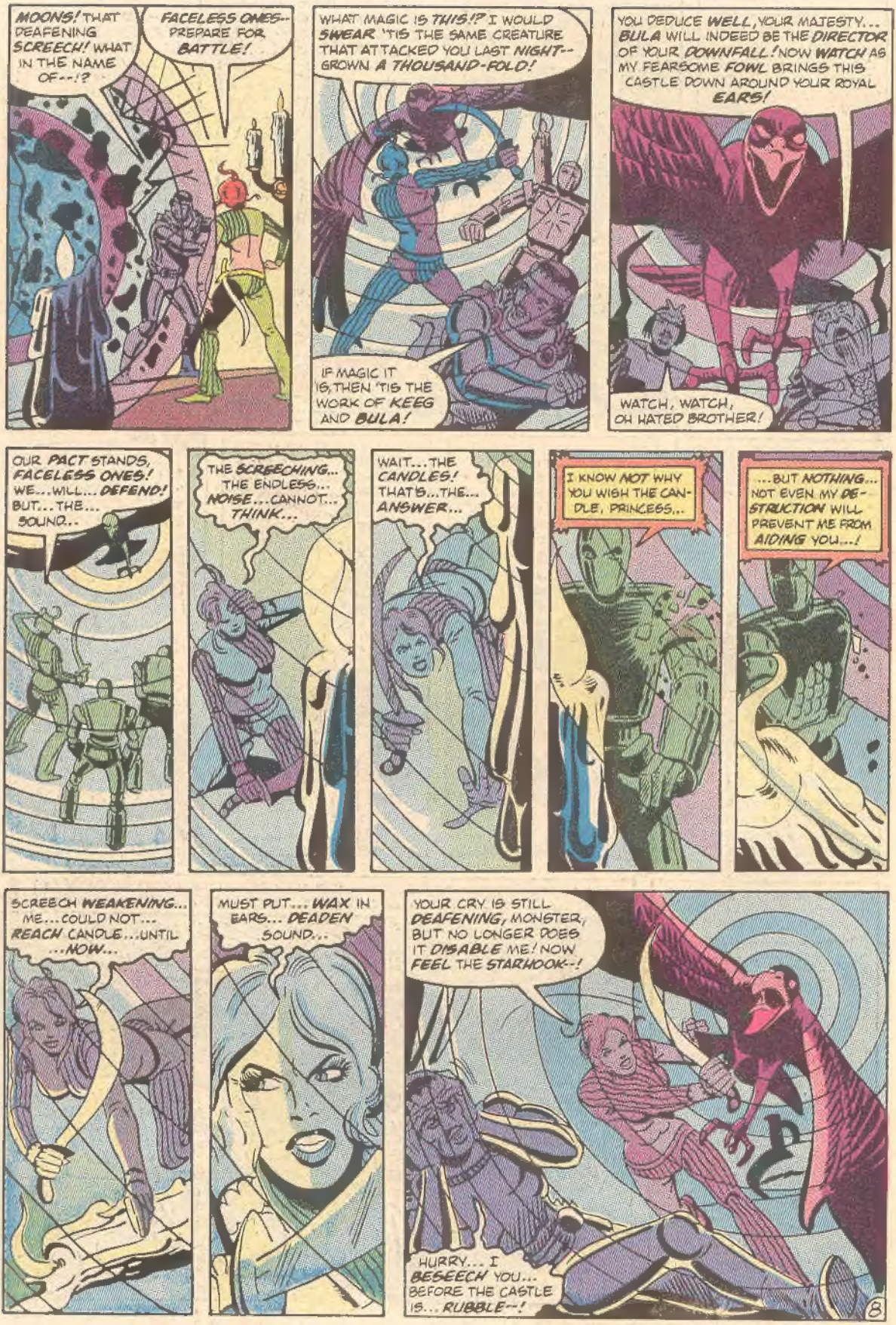
THE NEXT EVENING AS THE TWIN MOONS RISE...
LORD BULA, LORD BULA, IT IS FOLLY TO VENTURE INTO THE VILLAGE...THE LOYAL CITIZENS WOULD TURN ON US ON SIGHT!
...YES, THIS IS THE NEWS--THE KING HAS EMPLOYED A GREAT SORCERESS FROM ANOTHER WORLD IN HIS STRUGGLE AGAINST KEEG AND BULA!
SEE!? SEE!? THE KING KNOWS IT IS US WHO THREATEN HIM AND IS PREPARED!
SILENCE, MY YOUNG FOOL!
IF NOT FOR YOUR ROYAL STATION I NEVER WOULD-- HOLD! LOOK THERE-- MY HUNTING FOWL-- SLAIN!!
OH, NAMELESS GODS OF EVIL--AID ME! SEE WHAT THE FORCES WHO OPPOSE YOU HAVE DONE? GRANT ME THE POWER TO DESTROY THEM FOR EVERMORE!
AS IF IN ANSWER, THE AIR PARTS--AMID SWIRLING BLACKNESS, AND...
GREAT EVIL! A HOLE IN SPACE ITSELF...AND DROPPING FROM IT--A FALCONER'S GLOVE SUCH AS MY OWN!
TOUCH IT NOT! TOUCH IT NOT! I SWEAR IT IS CURSED BEYOND ALL RECKONINGS-- LOOK! LOOK! THE DEAD HAND OF HE WHO LAST POSSESSED IT, NO DOUBT, WAS STILL WITHIN!
COWARD! THE GLOVE THROBS WITH POWER! WHO CARES FROM WENCE IT CAME! ITS POWER SHALL BE MINE!
COME! LET US DEPART WITH THE CARCASS OF MY-- BY THE NAMELESS GODS! THE GLOVE-- IT HAS RESTORED LIFE TO MY FOWL!!!
GREAT EVIL, CAN IT BE THAT I POSSESS NOW THE POWER OF LIFE AND DEATH!?
BY THE DOUBLE MOONS--ALERT THE CASTLE GUARDS--'TIS PRINCE KEEG AND THE EVIL LORD BULA!!
BUT NONE FLEE TO WARN THE KING... FOR ALL ARE STUNNED INTO SILENCE AS THE ONCE-FELLED FOWL NOT ONLY LIVES AGAIN... BUT GROWS AND GROWS LARGER STILL!
NO...THE POWER IS GREATER THAN I DARED HOPE! IT GIVES POWER...ENDLESS POWER--AND IT IS UNDER MY DIRECTION! GROW, BIRD-- DRINK THE POWER I BESTOW UPON YOU NOW!!
RUN! RUN! LORD BULA HAS CREATED A GIANT ROC--AND IT IS UNDER HIS MALEVOLENT CONTROL!!
7


MOONS! THAT DEAFENING SCREECH! WHAT IN THE NAME OF--!?
FACELESS ONES-- PREPARE FOR BATTLE!
WHAT MAGIC IS THIS!? I WOULD SWEAR 'TIS THE SAME CREATURE THAT ATTACKED YOU LAST NIGHT-- GROWN A THOUSAND-FOLD!
IF MAGIC IT IS, THEN 'TIS THE WORK OF KEEG AND BULA!
YOU DEDUCE WELL, YOUR MAJESTY... BULA WILL INDEED BE THE DIRECTOR OF YOUR DOWNFALL! NOW WATCH AS MY FEARSOME FOWL BRINGS THIS CASTLE DOWN AROUND YOUR ROYAL EARS!
WATCH, WATCH, OH HATED BROTHER!
OUR PACT STANDS, FACELESS ONES! WE...WILL... DEFEND! BUT...THE... SOUND...
THE SCREECHING... THE ENDLESS... NOISE...CANNOT... THINK...
WAIT...THE CANDLES! THAT'S...THE... ANSWER...
I KNOW NOT WHY YOU WISH THE CANDLE, PRINCESS...
...BUT NOTHING... NOT EVEN MY DESTRUCTION WILL PREVENT ME FROM AIDING YOU...!
SCREECH WEAKENING... ME...COULD NOT... REACH CANDLE...UNTIL ...NOW...
MUST PUT... WAX IN EARS... DEADEN SOUND...
YOUR CRY IS STILL DEAFENING, MONSTER, BUT NO LONGER DOES IT DISABLE ME! NOW FEEL THE STARHOOK--!
HURRY... I BESEECH YOU... BEFORE THE CASTLE IS... RUBBLE--!
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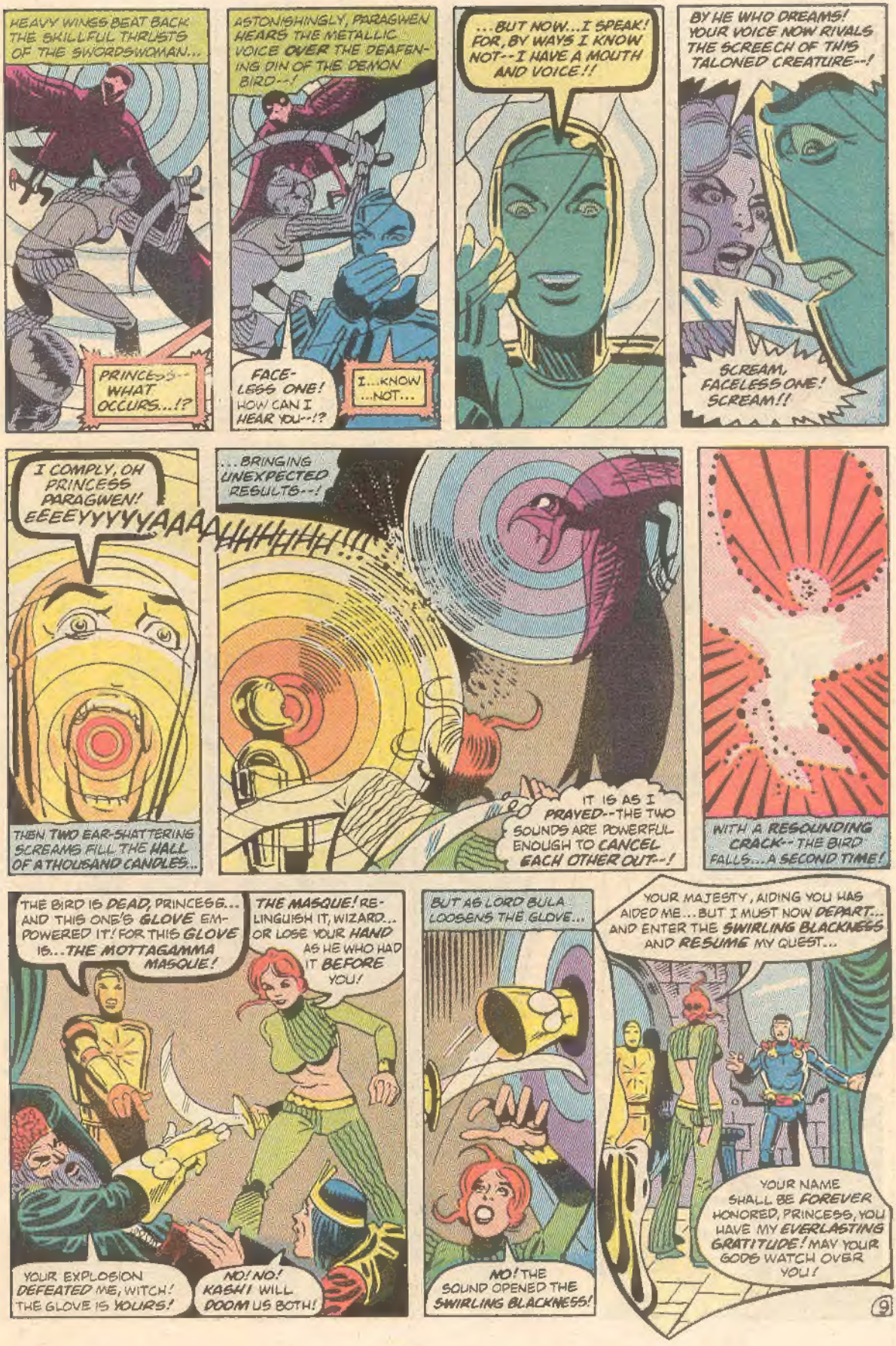
HEAVY WINGS BEAT BACK THE SKILLFUL THRUSTS OF THE SWORDSWOMAN...
PRINCESS--WHAT OCCURS...!?
ASTONISHINGLY, PARAGWEN HEARS THE METALLIC VOICE OVER THE DEAFENING DIN OF THE DEMON BIRD--!
FACELESS ONE! HOW CAN I HEAR YOU--!?
I...KNOW ...NOT...
...BUT NOW...I SPEAK! FOR, BY WAYS I KNOW NOT--I HAVE A MOUTH AND VOICE!!
BY HE WHO DREAMS! YOUR VOICE NOW RIVALS THE SCREECH OF THIS TALONED CREATURE--!
SCREAM, FACELESS ONE! SCREAM!!
I COMPLY, OH PRINCESS PARAGWEN! EEEEYYYYYAAAAHHHHHH!!!
THEN TWO EAR-SHATTERING SCREAMS FILL THE HALL OF A THOUSAND CANDLES...
...BRINGING UNEXPECTED RESULTS--!
IT IS AS I PRAYED--THE TWO SOUNDS ARE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO CANCEL EACH OTHER OUT--!
WITH A RESOUNDING CRACK--THE BIRD FALLS...A SECOND TIME!
THE BIRD IS DEAD, PRINCESS... AND THIS ONE'S GLOVE EMPOWERED IT! FOR THIS GLOVE IS...THE MOTTAGAMMA MASQUE!
THE MASQUE! RELINQUISH IT, WIZARD... OR LOSE YOUR HAND AS HE WHO HAD IT BEFORE YOU!
YOUR EXPLOSION DEFEATED ME, WITCH! THE GLOVE IS YOURS!
NO! NO! KASH! WILL DOOM US BOTH!
BUT AS LORD BULA LOOSENS THE GLOVE...
NO! THE SOUND OPENED THE SWIRLING BLACKNESS!
YOUR MAJESTY, AIDING YOU HAS AIDED ME...BUT I MUST NOW DEPART... AND ENTER THE SWIRLING BLACKNESS AND RESUME MY QUEST...
YOUR NAME SHALL BE FOREVER HONORED, PRINCESS, YOU HAVE MY EVERLASTING GRATITUDE! MAY YOUR GODS WATCH OVER YOU!

MASTER! PARAGWEN FAILS ANEW!
SHE DOES NOT FAIL, SERVANT... SHE JUST HAS NOT YET COMPLETED HER QUEST...
DIMENSIONS AWAY... IN FEN-RA, DWELLING PLACE OF THE ALL-POWERFUL LUGULBANDA...
...CREATOR OF THE FACELESS ONES!
YOU CONTINUE OBSERVANCE OF PARAGWEN...
...I, HOWEVER, SHALL CONTINUE MY SURVEILANCE OF THAT USURPER TYBALD!
JUST LOOK AT THE FOOL! POWER IN HIS GRASP AND HE WASTES IT FORCING SOME MAIDEN TO HIS WILL!
TYBALD... TYBALD... TYBALD! YOU REALLY ARE BENEATH MY NOTICE! WOULD THAT I COULD KEEP IT THAT WAY...
BUT, NO... YOUR ACTIONS, THOUGH INSIGNIFICANT, CAUSE ME MUCH CONCERN... AND ANYWAY, PRINCESS PARAGWEN IS A WHOLE LOT BETTER LOOKING...
AH, ME... THERE ARE SO MANY MORE MATTERS THAT SEEM MORE PRESSING...
... BUT, AS UNLIKELY AS IT APPEARS, TYBALD'S AND PARAGWEN'S INTERTWINED FATES ARE MOST IMPORTANT AT THIS JUNCTURE! SO IMPORTANT THAT IT IS TIME I TOOK DRASTIC ACTION--
--DIRECTLY!!!
NEXT: FACE-TO-FACE-TO-FACE... WITH TYBALD, PARAGWEN, LUGULBANDA AND...
...THE FACELESS ONES!